

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 HA-05 MCT-01 AID-05 IO-13 TRSE-00 ACDA-12
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R 181909Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4435
INFO AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
JCS WASHDC
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 01603

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEU, PGOV, DJ
SUBJ: FRENCH VIEW OF THE CURRENT DJIBOUTI SITUATION

REFS: A. 77 DJIBOUTI 770. B. STATE 2091.
C. STATE 1078.

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE QUAI VIEW OF THE DJIBOUTI POLITICAL
SITUATION CLOSELY PARALLELS THAT OF REF A: RESURGENCE
OF LONGSTANDING ISSA/AFAR ENMITY HAS CRACKED APART
THE FRAGILE HASSAN GOULED GOVERNMENT; GOULED HAS NOT
SHOWN THE INCLINATION TO COMPROMISE NECESSARY TO PATCH
IT UP; THE ALIENATED AHMED DINI APPEARS TO BE THE
ONLY AFAR POLITICIAN WITH SUFFICIENT STATURE IN HIS
COMMUNITY TO GET A COALITION OF THE TWO COMMUNITIES
WORKING (THE BRIGHT AND CAPABLE ABDULLAH KAMIL LACKS
THE PARTY AND ETHNIC TIES); THE CRACKDOWN ON TERRORISM
ESSENTIAL TO STABILITY HAS WIDENED THE BREACH BETWEEN
THE TWO COMMUNITIES. QUAI OFFICIALS ADD SOME UNIM-
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PORTANT NUANCES: THE LARGE INFLUX OF SOMALI CIVILIAN
REFUGEES AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF THE OGADEN FIGHTING
RESULTED IN THE PRO-SOMALI TILT AND HARDENING OF ISSA
ATTITUDES WHICH CAUSED THE GOVERNMENT COLLAPSE;
GOULED'S OWN ATTITUDE IS RIGID AND THE ROLE OF HIS
ADVISERS MAY BE ONLY MARGINAL. WHILE DEEPLY CONCERNED
ABOUT THE INTERNAL DJIBOUTI SCENE THE QUAI SEEMS TO

BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL SOMEHOW MUDDLE THROUGH AND INDEPENDENCE BE PRESERVED IF THE FRENCH MILITARY REMAINS IN PLACE AND IF DJIBOUTI CAN BE KEPT OUT OF THE ETHIOPIA/SOMALI CONFLICT. THESE TWO IFS ARE CLOSELY RELATED: IN THE PRE-ELECTION ATMOSPHERE OF FRANCE IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO KEEP FRENCH TROOPS IN DJIBOUTI ONCE THEY HAD BEGUN TO SUFFER COMBAT LOSSES. END SUMMARY.

1. FRENCH PERCEPTIONS OF EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE HORN AREA ARE COLORED BY CONCERN FOR THE CONTINUED INDEPENDENCE OF FORMER COLONY DJIBOUTI. CONVERSELY, INTEREST IN DJIBOUTI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IS CONCENTRATED ON THEIR IMPACT ON FRENCH EFFORTS TO KEEP DJIBOUTI OUT OF THE ETHIOPIA/SOMALI WAR. THE VIEW FROM THE QUAI D'ORSAY, THEREFORE, MAY SEEM SOMEWHAT LESS FOCUSED THAN THE REF A ANALYSIS OF DJIBOUTI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY CAUTIOUS ON THE CHANCES FOR CONTINUED DJIBOUTI INDEPENDENCE. THE KEY DECISION TO KEEP A FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE THERE AFTER INDEPENDENCE SEEMS A TYPICALLY GISCARDIAN ONE; IT WAS REQUIRED BY FRENCH DIGNITY AND SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND WAS THE ONLY COURSE CONSISTENT WITH THE FRENCH DESTINY IN AFRICA.

2. THE VIEW AT THE QUAI APPEARS TO BE THAT SO LONG
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AS IT IS POSSIBLE TO KEEP A 4,000-MAN PLUS MILITARY PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI, THE COUNTRY CAN HANG TOGETHER AND SURVIVE A GREAT DEAL OF SQUABBLING AND INEPTITUDE ON THE PART OF ITS POLITICIANS. MAINTAINING FRENCH FORCES IN DJIBOUTI, HOWEVER, IS BY NO MEANS A SURE THING. WHILE THE FRENCH PUBLIC HAS NOT REACTED STRONGLY TO DEATHS OF FRENCH CITIZENS CAUSED BY TERRORISTS, THERE WOULD BE A STRONG AND WIDESPREAD POPULAR REACTION IF FRENCH SOLDIERS WERE TO START DYING IN COMBAT--A SENTIMENT THE LEFT WOULD CAPITALIZE ON IN DEMANDING THAT THE TROOPS BE BROUGHT HOME. THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY, WHICH IS RUNNING BEHIND THE PARTIES OF THE LEFT IN OPINION POLLS LESS THAN TWO MONTHS BEFORE ELECTIONS WOULD BE FACED WITH A VERY DIFFICULT DECISION. IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT THE GOF IS TRYING TO WALK A TIGHTROPE BETWEEN SOMALIS AND ETHIOPIA WHILE EXERTING WHAT PRESSURE IT CAN ON THE GROUND TO STAY NEUTRAL IN THE ETHIOPIA/SOMALIA CONFLICT.

3. THIS FOREIGN POLICY PREOCCUPATION DOES NOT PRECLUDE DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE INTERNAL DJIBOUTI SCENE WHICH, OF COURSE, BEARS ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 01603

DJIBOUTI CAN STAY OUT OF THE CONFLICT, ITS CHANCES
OF SURVIVING OVER THE LONGER TERM, AND THE POSSIBILITY
AT SOME POINT OF WITHDRAWING FRENCH TROOPS. THE
QUAI ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNAL DJIBOUTI PICTURE CLOSELY
PARALLELS THAT OF REFTEL A. THEY SEE THE HIGH WATER
MARK FOR DJIBOUTI COHESION AS HAVING COME AT THE TIME
OF GOULED'S TRAVEL TO NEW YORK THIS PAST FALL. THE
INTERNAL SITUATION HAS BEEN IN DECLINE SINCE THEN.
QUAI OFFICIALS ARE INCLINED TO RELATE THIS DECLINE
TO THE GREAT INFLUX OF ETHNIC SOMALIS INTO DJIBOUTI
SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF THE OGADEN FIGHTING WHICH CAUSED
INCREASED PRESSURES ON THE ISSA LEADERSHIP TO TAKE
A HARDER LINE WITH THE AFARS AND LESSENERED RESTRAINTS
ON SUCH POSITIONS. THE FRENCH HERE AGREE THAT AHMED
DINI IS THE MOST PROMISING AFAR POLITICIAN AND THAT
THE EASIEST PATH TO POLITICAL RECONCILIATION IS THROUGH
FINDING A FORMULA TO GET HIM BACK IN THE GOVERNMENT.
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THEY REGARD ABDULLAH KAMEL AS HIGHLY COMPETENT BUT THINK HIS LACK OF PARTY TIES AND THE FACT HE HAS NOT BEEN ACTIVE IN AFAR AFFAIRS PRETTY MUCH ELIMINATE HIM FROM A MAJOR ROLE IN CONCILIATION. QUAI OFFICIALS SEEM TO THINK THAT GOULED'S RIGIDITY REFLECTS HIS OWN VIEWS RATHER THAN THAT OF HIS ADVISERS. (ON THIS POINT THE QUAI MAY JUST NOT BE AS WELL-INFORMED AS THE US AND FRENCH EMBASSIES ON THE SCENE.)

4. QUAI OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT BOTH THE RECENT VISIT OF AN ETHIOPIAN MISSION AND THAT OF EGYPTIAN UNDER SECRETARY AHMED OSMAN WERE HELPFUL IN BRINGING THE REALITIES OF THEIR SITUATION HOME TO THE DJIBOUTI LEADERSHIP. THEY SHARE OUR HOPE THAT THE EPMG WILL SOON NAME A COMPETENT AMBASSADOR TO DJIBOUTI AS A MORE EFFECTIVE BALANCE TO SOMALI ACTIVISM.

5. QUAI OFFICIALS DO NOT SEE A SOVIET HAND IN THE RECENT TERRORISM IN DJIBOUTI (COMIDEASTFOR 181411Z). THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THE SOVIETS ARE PRESENTLY A FACTOR IN DJIBOUTI BEYOND THAT WHICH FLOWS FROM THEIR LARGE-SCALE MILITARY SUPPORT OF ETHIOPIA. THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS SITUATION COULD CHANGE IF, FOR INSTANCE, THE ETHIOPIANS WERE TO LOSE CONTROL OF MASSAWA AND ASSAB. IN SUCH A CASE THE SOVIET COMMITMENT TO ETHIOPIA MIGHT LEAD THEM TO ACQUIESCE IN WHATEVER STEPS ARE NECESSARY TO ENSURE ACCESS TO THE RED SEA, INCLUDING A POSSIBLE MOVE AGAINST DJIBOUTI.
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